

City Academy 555 East 200 South Salt Lake City, Utah 84102

April 30, 2007





Utah State Office of Education 250 East 500 South P.O. Box 144200 Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200

THE REPORT OF THE VISITING TEAM REVIEWING

City Academy 555 East 200 South Salt Lake City, Utah 84102

April 30, 2007

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Patti Harrington, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Public Instruction

DIVISION OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND SCHOOL SUCCESS

Myron Cottam, Associate Superintendent

Brett Moulding, Director Curriculum and Instruction

Georgia Loutensock, Accreditation Specialist Curriculum and Instruction

Salt Lake City, Utah

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	ii
Utah State Board of Education	iii
City Academy Board of Trustees	1
City Academy Administration and Staff	2
City Academy Mission Statement and Belief Statements	3
Members of the Visiting Team	4
Visiting Team Report	5
Chapter 1: School Profile	5
Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry	6
Chapter 2: The Self-Study Process	6
Chapter 3: Instructional and Organizational Effectiveness	7
Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals	8
Curriculum Development	9
Quality Instructional Design	9
Quality Assessment Systems	10
Leadership for School Improvement	11
Community Building	13
Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning	13
Chapter 4: Northwest Association of Accredited Schools (NAAS)	14
Chapter 5: School Improvement Efforts – Action Plan	14
Chapter 6: Major Commendations and Recommendations of the Visiting Team	15

FOREWORD

The major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate school growth and improvement so as to increase student achievement.

In these efforts, the school staff makes a comprehensive evaluation of the school's programs, operations, and results. The school determines how actual practices align to stated objectives and resulting outcomes. It is a three-phased evaluation: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, April 30, 2007, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to increase student achievement.

The entire staff of City Academy is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the visiting team. The excellent leadership given by Executive Director Sonia Woodbury is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at City Academy, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more dramatically increase student achievement at City Academy.

Patti Harrington, Ed.D. State Superintendent of Public Instruction

UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

250 East 500 South P. O. Box 144200 Salt Lake City, UT 84114-4200

District 1

Teresa L. Theurer 33 Canterbury Ln Logan, UT 84321 Phone: (435) 753-0740

District 2

Greg W. Haws 5841 West 4600 South Hooper, UT 84315 Phone: (801) 985-7980

District 3

Richard Moss 629 North 100 West Santaquin, UT 84655 Phone: (801) 787-1676

District 4

Richard Sadler 875 Edgewood Dr. Ogden, UT 84403

Phone: (801) 479-7988

District 5

Kim R. Burningham 932 Canyon Crest Drive Bountiful, UT 84010 Phone: (801) 292-9261

Josh M. Reid*

201 S Main St. Ste 1800 Salt Lake City, UT 84111 Phone: (801) 536-6787

Patti Harrington

Executive Officer

District 6

Michael G. Jensen 4139 S. Aubrey Lane West Valley City, UT 84128 Phone: (801) 968-5960

District 7

Randall A. Mackey 1172 East 100 South Salt Lake City, UT 84102 Phone: (801) 582-4237

District 8

Janet A. Cannon 5256 Holladay Blvd. Salt Lake City, UT 84117 Phone: (801) 272-3516

District 9

Denis R. Morrill 6024 South 2200 West Taylorsville, UT 84118 Phone: (801) 969-2334

District 10

Laurel Brown 5311 South Lucky Clover Ln Murray, UT 84123 Phone: (801) 261-4221

Marlon O. Snow*

1247 E 430 N Orem, UT 84057 Phone: (801) 224-6163 **District 11**

Bill Colbert 14866 Village Vista Dr. Draper, UT 84020 Phone: (801) 572-1608

District 12

Mark Cluff 645 West Hubbard Cir Alpine, UT 84004 Phone: (801) 756-7623

District 13

Thomas Gregory 1056 West 1150 South Provo, UT 84601 Phone: (801) 607-4702

District 14

Dixie Allen 218 West 5250 North Vernal, UT 84078 Phone: (435) 789-0534

District 15

Debra G. Roberts Box 1780 Beaver, UT 84713 Phone: (435) 438-5843

Cyndee Miya**

1833 Ridge Road Layton, UT 84040 Phone: (801) 546-4830

Twila B. Affleck

Secretary

12/10/2006

^{*}Board of Regents Appointments ** CMAC Representative Appointment

CITY ACADEMY

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

John Kesler, Chair	Attorney			
Robert Anderson	Vice President, Zions Bank			
Samantha Cullinane	Parent			
Kristin Fink	Director, Coalition of Civic, Character, and Service Learning			
Joe Krella	IHC			
EX-OFFICIO				
Martha Ball				
Tracy Stevens				
Carolyn Turkanic	Open Classroom			

CITY ACADEMY

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

School Administration

Dr. Sonia Woodbury	Executive Director School Community Coordinator		
<u>Counseling</u>	Councelor		
Jami Brothwell	Counseior		
Support Staff			
Sara MosesRam Prasad Boppana	•		

Faculty

Full-Time:	Deanna Taylor	Wade Gardiner
Sheila Cody	Katie Tyser	Melissa Grieve
Megan Ferguson	Jay Weight	Carla Kelley
Jocelyn Johnson	Dr. Yu Davis Zheng	Curtis Merci
Dan Kaminsky		Allegra Shurtliff
Scott MacMurdo	Part-Time:	Todd Skinner
Jodie Madsen	Sean Benson	Shea Wickelson
Usha Narra	Carol Copene	
Gareth Orr	David Ehrman	

CITY ACADEMY

MISSION STATEMENT

To create a model secondary public school where all students are engaged in academically rigorous, civically oriented curriculum, critical and creative thinking, and authentic learning in a professionalized educational environment.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

- Students can learn, want to learn, and learn by different means.
- Students are the stewards of their own education.
- Literacy and numeracy skills are essential building blocks of all learning and should be mastered by all students.
- High school graduates should demonstrate competency in and appreciation for English language arts, mathematics, laboratory science, the social sciences, healthy lifestyles, a second language, pragmatics, and fine arts.
- A relevant education challenges students to think and solve problems creatively.
- Interconnected, authentic learning in the arts, sciences, and citizenship prepares students to become lifelong learners, and engaged and active citizens.
- Education is most effective when it is cooperatively supported by educators, parents, and community.

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Ted P. Lovato, Consultant, Utah State Office of Education (USOE), Visiting Team Chairperson

Jessie Kidd, DaVinci Academy of Science and the Arts (Charter School)

Danny Lundell, Payson High School, Nebo School District

VISITING TEAM REPORT

CITY ACADEMY SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

City Academy is a public charter school for grades 7-12. After taking several transitional years to find a permanent location, City Academy has now found its home in downtown Salt Lake City. The school presently serves a population of approximately 125 students. The school is evolving to develop excellence and innovation in academics and citizenship. The organizational structure includes a highly involved administration and passionate faculty and department heads. Teachers meet often to collaborate for student achievement. The school culture is clearly one of authentic partnerships among students, teachers, and community.

The school provides rigorous and authentic learning to its students using a Socratic Constructionist model of teaching. Opportunities for dialog between student and teacher come frequently, with students feeling noticeably comfortable with their school climate. The pleasantly diverse faculty is highly qualified and brings a variety of backgrounds and interests to the school community.

a) What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?

City Academy conducted surveys over the past two years to analyze teaching, courses, administrative organization, and community involvement. These surveys revealed an overall welcoming feel at the school, with learning recognized by stakeholders as being the chief priority of the school. Small class sizes, communication, and competent administration have met the expectations of stakeholders. However, the counseling and advising aspect of academics were less developed.

While only a few students felt they were prepared for more advanced learning, most students at City Academy feel they are receiving a good education. The school's DRSLs reflect its strategies for developing action plans to improve student preparedness for the advanced direction the administration and faculty would like to move toward.

What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?

The Visiting Team commends City Academy for its innovative school culture and the collaborative feel of the school. The Visiting Team recommends that the teachers and administration continue to extend its efforts to systemically collect and analyze relevant data in order to guide decision making in relation to instruction and curriculum.

The Visiting Team was appreciative of the information provided in the profile. However, the school must continue to put its best foot forward and to profile continually and thoroughly. The Visiting Team proposes that, in future self-studies, more information be provided on follow-up studies or other evidence of the endeavors of students after leaving City Academy. School activities such as town hall, service projects, and community outreach were insufficiently reported in the study – yet the Visiting Team learned, while on campus, that these activities are a highly regarded and integral part of the school.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

- Use relevant data to guide decision making in relation to instruction and curriculum that directly affect student learning.
- Continue to lay the foundation by preparing students in the lower grades so they can be better prepared for advanced coursework.
- Continue to investigate methods for successfully preparing students for required standardized tests.
- Continue to develop policies that assist students to act responsibly throughout their tenure at City Academy. A code of conduct should be developed and enforced.

CHAPTER 2: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS

a) To what extent has the school community engaged in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?

City Academy has been engaged in a collaborative self-study process over the past two years. The bulk of the process was carried by the administration, providing direction and guidance in addressing areas of school improvement. From living room discussions to Saturday department meetings, a good amount of evidence is present to indicate that City Academy utilized a collaborative approach in involving the faculty members, administration, and students in the self-study process. It is clear that the director has worked diligently to lead her faculty through a collaborative self-study process.

Throughout the school, each department worked toward adapting the DRSLs to its own curriculum. Additionally, departments developed plans to incorporate their DRSLs with their standards and align them to the State Core in each curriculum area, and analyzed their effectiveness against the 11 Essential Questions derived from the NSSE rubrics. From this data, each department was able to ascertain areas of strength and identify specific improvement goals.

There was a lack of involvement of the school community in the process of developing the mission, beliefs, and DRSLs. As the leadership team worked to

align the educational agenda—including shared vision, beliefs, mission, and goals—they neglected to involve parents, students, and all staff members. Focus groups were not created in preparation of the whole school improvement process. The Visiting Team recommends that City Academy create these essential focus groups to collaborate for student achievement throughout the immediate and broader school community for feedback and validation of the school improvement plan.

b) To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?

The work completed within the departments shows a clear and significant effort to identify areas of strength and deficiency at City Academy. The departmental analyses are well structured and focused on instruction. It is recommended, however, that each of the departments continue to refine its curriculum standards and align its teaching with the school-wide desired results for student learning (DRSLs).

There is strong evidence to suggest that staff members were involved with and committed to completing the self-study within each department. Continued collaboration and open communication between the accreditation committee and other stakeholders, including parents and the community, is encouraged. The Visiting Team recommends that the leadership team revisit the data section of the profile for the purpose of disaggregating the data in each of the areas assessed.

The Visiting Team also recommends that a detailed narrative analysis of the data be included in the profile to answer the questions, "Who is learning?" "Who is not learning?" and "Are there patterns or trends in student achievement?" The Visiting Team also recommends that the disaggregated data be shared at the departmental and individual teacher levels to facilitate identification of at-risk students and to inform instructional practices.

CHAPTER 3: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

City Academy's school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs) are as follows:

- 1. Academic Knowledge and Skills: Achieve high standards of literacy and numeracy and demonstrate sound competency in and appreciation for the arts and sciences.
- 2. Thinking Skills and Propensities: Demonstrate sound abilities in creative thinking, making decisions, reasoning, inquiry, solving problems, and seeing things in the mind's eye.

- 3. Responsible Citizenship: Demonstrate social awareness local, national, global and appreciation of interdependence, integrity, respect for others, willingness and ability for collaborative work, self-management, and a propensity for civil discourse.
- 4. Health and Wellness Lifestyles Awareness: Demonstrate understanding and skills for maintaining a healthy lifestyle, balance, and holistic approach to life roles and experiences.
- 5. Technological Awareness and Skills: Demonstrate knowledge and competencies with instruments and applications of technology, and relationships between research, word processing, communication, and impact.
- 6. Independent and Life-long Learning Skills and Propensities: Are open and enthusiastic about learning, and have dispositions and skills for communicating, be financially literate, know how to learn, persevere to learn, and become independent learners.

Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals:

a) To what extent did the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?

The Visiting Team, in examining City Academy's shared vision for the school, found that a consensus building process was established that involved the school's community at the time it was developed. Information was examined and used to implement a mission that reflects the school's original founding charter. The beliefs of City Academy are research based and have implications for student learning that are also based on reviews of research and the school's profile data. Although, when asked, not all individuals knew the school's mission, it was very evident that it was a guiding force behind all that goes on at City Academy.

b) To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success?

The statements of the school's beliefs are comprehensive and clearly define the core values of the school. The beliefs address the major issues pertinent to effective decision making and policy development. The mission statement describes a compelling purpose and direction for the school, serves as a call to action for the school's stakeholders, and reflects a clear and strong focus on student learning as the chief priority for the school. It is clearly evident that the faculty and staff of City Academy have embraced the belief statements and use them to give direction and purpose to their work with students.

c) To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs)?

City Academy's mission and beliefs are designed in such a way that they should be a great support to the DRSLs. The Visiting Team recommends that the school community be informed on how the mission and belief statements should be the scaffolding that supports the DRSLs and all that takes place with the environment of City Academy. The mission and belief statements of City Academy should directly address priorities for improving student learning and for improving instructional and organizational effectiveness.

Curriculum Development:

a) To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?

The staff at City Academy works collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum. This is evidenced by the collaborative atmosphere that exists within the school; students, teachers, and staff members all stated that collaboration is a vital part of the school environment. The curriculum is based on clearly defined standards that reflect worthwhile expectations for student learning. The curriculum is coordinated across grade levels through ongoing dialog among teachers to establish a shared vision for student learning.

b) To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's desired results for student learning?

The teaching staff at City Academy works collaboratively to support development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's DRSLs. The year starts off with a two-week institute for the teachers to pull together and plan the curriculum for the year, as well as focus on team building. Teachers stated that this is a great time to work collaboratively and establish the curriculum for the school year. This support provides for the effective use of research-based instructional practices in implementing the curriculum. The staff then meets on a very regular basis throughout the school year to collaborate on curriculum and many other school needs. Everyone interviewed expressed very positive feelings on the collaboration that takes place at City Academy. It is obvious to the Visiting Team that this success is due to the leadership and vision of the Executive Director.

Quality Instructional Design:

a) To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of

learning experiences that actively engage students?

During the visit to City Academy, the Visiting Team was able to observe a variety of learning experiences that actively engaged the students. The instructional strategies and learning activities are strongly aligned with the DRSLs. Instruction includes frequent and timely assessments of students' learning progress and feedback that informs both teachers and students when and if additional time or alternative learning strategies are needed to improve student learning. A positive academic learning environment is established that leads to actively engaging students in the process of their learning.

b) To what extent does the professional staff employ a variety of instructional strategies to ensure the needs of different learners are met?

The Visiting Team was impressed with the degree of dedication that the teaching staff displayed in meeting the needs of diverse learners at City Academy. Emphasis is placed on both essential knowledge and skills and higher-order thinking skills that require students to apply their learning in meaningful context. Students are provided with opportunities to apply their learning to tasks that call for decision-making, investigation, and problem solving.

c) To what extent do the professional staff and leadership provide additional opportunities which support student learning?

The Visiting Team observed that opportunities to support student learning at City Academy are abundant. The students meet with an advisor daily to receive support for learning and to focus on skills outlined in the Utah Life Skills booklet. The students meet with that advisor for an extended period of time weekly to focus more on the skills necessary to be successful students, and to receive a personalized education. The students are also members of a committee that focuses on an area of interest for the student so that he/she may provide input on what happens at the school. These committees give the students a direct investment in the school and a feeling of control over their education.

Quality Assessment Systems:

a) To what extent has the staff developed classroom or school-wide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?

The staff at City Academy has fully developed classroom and school-wide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement. Many of the teachers use rubrics to grade student work and provide direct feedback on student learning. The school-wide grading system is unique in that it does not give traditional letter grades for student work. The students are assessed and marked based on competency. The categories and scale give the students clear and concise feedback on their current status in the learning process.

City Academy believes the competency-based assessment system is an attempt "to replace the traditional but vague letter grade and GPA system."

b) To what extent are assessments of student learning developed using methods that reflect the intended purpose and performance standards?

The Visiting Team observed that the selection of the method of assessing student learning is based on the type of learning to be assessed, the specific performance standards for evaluating student achievement, and the purpose of the assessment. The selected methods are also aligned with the instructional approach used in the classroom, and are administratively feasible and cost effective.

c) To what extent are assessments designed, developed, and used in a fair and equitable manner?

Assessments at City Academy are designed in a manner that is fair and equitable to students. This was shown to the Visiting Team through interviews with the faculty, staff, administration, parents, and students. Furthermore, the assessments are directly linked to specific instructional uses that promote students' achievement and continuous improvement. Students can describe in their own words the purpose of each assessment and how the results can be used to help them improve their learning.

The Visiting Team was impressed with City Academy's level of competency with representing authentic demonstration of knowledge and ability in particular subject areas, rather than with an average of points accumulated over time. It is also interesting to note that City Academy does not rank its students, nor does it award letter grades, honors, or prizes. The Visiting Team could only speculate on how this does or does not assist a student's application to an institution of higher learning.

Leadership for School Improvement:

a) To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning?

The Visiting Team observed that some of the major factors and conditions for establishing an academic learning climate are evident, but are not fully developed. Students and staff feel valued and important. There is a clear and strong focus on instructional goals.

It was obvious to the Visiting Team that the leadership needs to focus on some apparent learning distractions like dress code, student conduct, electronic devices, etc.

b) To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative?

Decisions at City Academy are directly aligned with the school's beliefs and missions, and advance the achievement of the school's goals. The analysis of pertinent data related to the specific issues under consideration informs the decision-making process.

c) To what extent does the school leadership monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness through a comprehensive assessment system and continuous reflection?

The Visiting Team failed to see a clear and consistent leadership model in use at City Academy. The school periodically monitors students' progress in achieving the essential knowledge and skills for their learning. The school makes limited use of assessment and evaluation data for the purpose of improving student learning and instructional effectiveness.

d) To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment?

The leadership at City Academy needs to utilize a systematic and comprehensive assessment system to establish monitoring of student progress and evaluation of the effectiveness of instructional practices and organizational conditions. The leadership team should also thoroughly review assessment and evaluation data, and engage in continuous reflection to identify and develop appropriate interventions to improve student learning and to strengthen instructional effectiveness. Attention needs to be directed toward student and faculty retention rates.

e) To what extent does the school leadership make decisions related to the allocation and use of resources which align with the school goals, the achievement of the DRSLs, and school improvement efforts?

Decisions at City Academy related to the allocation and use of resources are systematically aligned with the school's goals. Existing resources are recast in the service of advancing the school's mission, goals, and school improvement initiatives. The leadership team should be commended for the school's use of resources and fundraising to provide to the learning environment at City Academy.

f) To what extent does the school leadership empower the school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning?

The Visiting Team had a difficult time determining (observing) how the leadership of City Academy involved the school community in sharing the responsibility for student learning. The leadership needs to develop and implement the focus groups

as part of the accreditation process to provide an opportunity for the school community to be involved in the decision-making process.

Community Building:

a) To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?

Positive and productive working relationships have been established among students, teachers, support staff, and administrators. There is strong evidence of the effectiveness of the work of the school's stakeholders as a learning community. The school creates and sustains a learning environment for students that nurtures a sense of caring and belonging. Collaborative and interdependent teams are established to achieve goals.

b) To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?

City Academy is in a new and permanent location that should facilitate the building of community relationships. At the time of the Visiting Team's visit, it appeared that limited efforts were being made to engage parents and families as partners in the learning process; this is another area in which focus groups can have a tremendous benefit for the school. There is little or no evidence of collegiality working relationships across K-16 levels of education. Limited efforts are made to establish collaborative networks of support with community members in groups, youth-serving agencies, clergy and government leaders, and leaders of higher education and business. The Visiting Team believes this aspect will improve over time as the school becomes older and more established.

Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning:

a) To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs focused on the school's goals for improvement?

The school's organizational system and culture are supportive of school improvement and professional development. Professional development programs for administrators, teachers, and support staff focus on the knowledge and skills required to fulfill the performance expectations of their roles. The professional development programs need to contribute to the achievement of the school's goals for improvement. City Academy should develop action plans that support the improvement plan and foster the accreditation process.

New teachers expressed great appreciation for the in-service provided to them by the Executive Director prior to the start of the school year. b) To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?

City Academy fosters a limited understanding of the change process among those who have a stake in the work of the school. The school provides support for the work of individuals and groups responsible for implementing school improvement on a limited basis. The Visiting Team observed that the leadership of the school was the major force behind the accreditation visit, and that not many of the stakeholders were aware of the process needing to take place.

CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) STANDARDS

City Academy is in compliance with all NAAS standards for accreditation. Over the years, the school has worked diligently to maintain the accreditation standards as outlined by the NAAS and the Utah State Office of Education. The school's curriculum is aligned with the Utah State Core Curriculum. All professional educators are properly licensed and endorsed for their particular assignments, in accordance with Utah state requirements. The school is financially viable and ethical in its business practices. City Academy has created and maintained a culture of continuous improvement that supports student achievement.

CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS – ACTION PLAN

a) To what extent is the school-wide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up?

City Academy is to be applauded for the selection of admirable goals to help students learn. It is apparent that the staff wants students to do well, and this is reflected in the goals. The Visiting Team, after careful observation, feels that all stakeholders must be involved and collaborate together on the goals and the entire accreditation process.

The administration, faculty, and staff of City Academy must continually ask themselves whether desired outcomes are indeed measurable.

b) To what extent is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, school-wide and system-wide?

It appears that there is school-wide commitment; however, the Visiting Team emphasizes that the plan needs the changes mentioned above. All stakeholders,

including many parents/guardians, must collaborate to make the suggested changes to the action plan.

c) How sound does the follow-up process that the school intends to use for monitoring the accomplishments of the school-wide action plan appear to be?

The data collection method the school uses is labor intensive, but will work in meeting goals if all those responsible will complete the data collection and analysis as stated in the school-wide improvement plan. Students must take an active role in their learning; thus, goals will be more achievable.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team commends City Academy for the positive and unique culture evidenced through direct observation of students, classrooms, and teacher/student interaction.
- The Visiting Team commends the staff of City Academy for working together and establishing a strong sense of collegiality, trust, and collaboration among teachers, administration, and students.
- The Visiting Team commends City Academy for its prevention of grade inflation with its competency-based assessment, where students demonstrate levels of competency (in categories labeled Initial, Reaching, Solid, and Expanded), and also with promotion and graduation standards and policies.
- The Visiting Team commends City Academy for its efforts to secure a viable and permanent environment (physical plant) for the school, which is located close to many cultural and higher leaning opportunities for students and staff. The Visiting Team advises that a more permanent and visible sign be displayed on the front of the building.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends that all the stakeholders of City Academy collaborate together on the accreditation process.
- It is the recommendation of the Visiting Team that City Academy evaluate the high attrition of both faculty and students and develop strategies to sustain them.

- It is recommended by the Visiting Team that City Academy study apparent learning distractions such as student dress and conduct, electronic devices during instructional time, etc., and implement guidelines and policies to improve overall student conduct and expectations.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the community of City Academy structure committee work to fall in line with the requirements of the accreditation focus groups, which is absent from the school profile.
- The Visiting Team recommends that greater investment be made in a quality recruiting plan for greater student enrollment, thus sustaining institutional longevity.
- The Visiting Team recommends that City Academy evaluate the action plan and develop additional plans to cover all aspects of school direction and improvement.
- The Visiting Team recommends that City Academy develop a viable leadership model to guide the entire City Academy community to a successful future.